

THIS WEEK'S NEWS FROM

**Inside Washington.**

# How a Famous Red Manipulated U.S. Media

By PETER SAMUEL

"Journalist" Wilfred Burchett said in personal letters to his family that he was on the payroll of at least one Communist government and received military decorations from another. These revelations have been made in Australia by Politics Prof. Robert Manne of LaTrobe University, the first person to study Burchett's personal papers since his death in 1963. Manne's findings appear in the August 1983 issue of *Quadrant* magazine.

In a letter from Peking dated April 16, 1951, Burchett wrote his father: "I don't have to worry about finances here. . . . I am relieved of financial cares and given facilities. . . . What I need comes to me, from food and writing paper and typewriter ribbons. I [just] sign for it. . . . I would do anything at all for their [Chinese Communist] people and government."

Burchett was as good as his word. He followed Chinese Communist troops into North Korea and became a leading propagandist against U.S. and allied troops, through writings and broadcasts. He specialized in crafting atrocity stories, including the infamous charges of the use of germ warfare by the United States, allegations of torture against POWs and deliberate bombing of civilians.

The Americans' "destruction of Korea was worse than anything the Nazis did [in] Poland," reported Burchett. They were involved in a "monstrous slaughter of scores of thousands of Korean civilians in cold blood" and displayed "master race arrogance."

According to one Burchett dispatch: "American troops turned machine guns on demonstrators and hurled hand grenades into their midst." In efforts by American authorities to persuade POWs to desert the North Korean regime, "the torture rooms, the gas chambers, the steam-heat rooms, the branding irons and the tattooers' needles and the gallows were kept busy," reported Burchett.

In fabricating these atrocity stories, Burchett relied mostly on his imagination, fired by a deep hatred of Western society, but he also made use of "confessions" extracted by force from allied POWs.

American Lt. James Stanley told in a sworn statement of how a confession to dropping germ warfare containers over North Korea was extracted from him after four months of interrogation and torture culminating in a mock firing squad and "a last chance to confess."

Burchett was "an active participant" in the production and distribution of "confessions" extracted from USAF Lieutenants Quinn, Enoch, O'Neal and Kniss. Kniss said Burchett personally threatened him with "drastic measures" when he said the confessions were fake and forced, in the presence of two French visitors.

Derek Kinne, an English POW in North Korea, called Burchett a "son of a bitch" for his propaganda talk and was told by Burchett, "I could have you shot." An hour after the incident, two guards came and took him away, saying he had a bad attitude "in the way I'd talked to Comrade Burchett." He was kept in solitary confinement for over a year, beaten daily and constantly pressed to sign a confession, one passage of which required that he admit to the crime of "a hostile attitude to Comrade Burchett!"

Several POWs testified that Burchett had appeared at their camp wearing a Chinese military uniform.

Australian government records seen by Prof. Manne report U.S. intelligence as quoting a North Korean defecting officer as saying Burchett worked directly on the orders of Gen. Chung San Man of the North Korean Foreign Ministry. The same defector said many stories attributed to Burchett had in fact been composed in the North Korean Ministry of Culture and Propaganda.

Burchett and the British Communist journalist Alan Winnington practiced manipulation of the Western reporters covering the peace talks at Panmunjom. In a letter to his father Burchett wrote: "Today when POW lists were released, most of the American press were virtually crawling on their

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2.

hands and knees on the road to us, begging for crumbs of information. We were in the lovely position of ignoring all those who had tried to injure us and handed priceless information to the few who had written honestly about the talks."

An American intelligence study of the role of Burchett and Winnington, in the Australian government archives, concluded the two were

"primarily responsible for the preparation of Chinese propaganda for U.N. prisoners and worked actively with English-speaking prisoners to try to persuade them to accept communism and betray their own countries."

Burchett's private papers in Melbourne show he even received war medals from the North Koreans. He wrote his father of one war medal: "It was pinned on my breast, alongside two others, by the country's vice-president. . . . Premier Kim Il Sung was very nice to me, greeted me as 'an old Comrade in arms.' "

Manne finds in the Australian government records that the Australian authorities worked actively to prepare treason charges against Burchett, but of course he evaded these, staying away from countries from which he might be extradited to stand trial — until after two decades the political will to prosecute him in his homeland had dissipated.

Burchett spent time in Moscow after the Korean War and according to Yuri Krotkov, a KGB officer (who later defected to the U.S.), the Australian journalist said he had long been a member of the Australian Communist party but was "an illegal" or underground member. He told Krotkov he had been "paid by the Chinese Communist party" while working in China and that he had close relations with Chou En-lai.

In Vietnam he had been given a house, car, secretary and was "equipped very beautifully." He wanted the same from the Soviets. After a hitch due to a personnel change in the KGB, and mislaying of files, Burchett was brought aboard the Soviet service, said Krotkov, and worked "under the overall direction of KGB Col. Barsegov, who ran the section of the KGB concerned with foreign correspondents." Krotkov said in Senate testimony the KGB gave Burchett a good apartment "and, well, I guess, necessary money."

Burchett's time in Moscow led him to drink "like a fish," according to a Novosti official quoted by fellow journalist Dennis Warner. Burchett moved in 1962 to Vietnam to work on behalf of the "war of national liberation" in the south and in the 13 years before Hanoi's tanks crashed through the fence of the presidential palace in

Saigon, published seven books, several films and a vast wordage of newspaper and magazine writing in support of the Communist cause.

Scholar Robert Manne writes that from the beginning Hanoi understood the importance of the "struggle for the hearts and minds of the American and Western publics." Propaganda was critical to their war effort and Manne says that "Wilfred Burchett's role was second to none." He was central to the campaign to create a fraudulent image of the National Liberation Front as an indigenous southern movement, independent of Hanoi, nationalist, not Communist, a response to repression and injustice and genocidal foreign intervention from the imperialist U.S.A.

Burchett may have been a key North Viet-

namese operator in the recruitment to the Hanoi line of such personalities as Jane Fonda, Noam Chomsky and Benjamin Spock. We do know that all three were prominent sponsors of his highly publicized and very political 60th birthday celebration. But his most important work was with journalists. He says in his own memoirs that he befriended CBS reporter Charles Collingwood, even managing to get himself employed for awhile as a special consultant with CBS. But he did best of all with the New York Times.

Burchett was the Vietnamese Communist authorities' handler of Western newsmen with the mission of manipulating them into echoing the party line. Some seem to have been mighty manipulable!

The private papers in Melbourne show that Burchett, in correspondence with his father and son in Australia, gloated about his successful use of New York Times correspondent Harrison Salisbury. He quoted a letter he received afterward from Salisbury as saying "I am deeply grateful to you for the aid and assistance. . ." while Salisbury visited North Vietnam.

His son speculated in a letter that Salisbury had thoroughly embraced the same points as Burchett, and Burchett replied, "Your suspicions were quite correct. . . but that is not a thing to talk about. The main thing is the result. As you said, Harrison said what I have been saying for a long time but it is more important that it is said in the New York Times."

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Salisbury wrote a panegyric introduction for Burchett's memoirs published by, yes, New York Times Books in 1981 (*At the Barricades: Forty Years on the Cutting Edge of History*), saying of this Communist operative, he was an "individualist," a "humanist," an "iconoclast," one who "believes in the underdog," with "sympathies... toward the cause of struggling, backward, emerging nationalist regimes."

In the *New York Times Review of Books*, Thomas Powers described Burchett as a man of "uncommon honesty." The *Times*, like other Western newspapers, regularly ran Burchett's writings, often identifying him merely as "an Australian journalist," sometimes calling him "left-wing," but usually treating him as an objective reporter and commentator.

After spending time on Burchett's personal papers in Melbourne and reviewing government documents, Prof. Manne writes: "To describe Burchett as an objective and honest reporter... is the equivalent of calling Julius Streicher a commentator on German-Jewish affairs."

He concludes: "In giving aid and comfort to the enemies of his country at time of war, Burchett was in the deepest sense of the word a traitor.... Burchett broke all ties of faith and community with his countrymen."

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*Mr. Samuel is an Australian correspondent now residing in Washington. He was co-editor of the journal Vietnam Digest and a reporter in Vietnam during the war. He has followed critically the career of his fellow countryman and "journalist" for 20 years, and indeed wrote the article 14 years ago against Burchett that drew the celebrated and unsuccessful libel suit in Sydney. He wishes to acknowledge drawing heavily here on a long article that has just appeared in Sydney in Quadrant magazine on Burchett, drawing on his private papers and written by Robert Manne, and also on Stephen Morris' "A Scandalous Journalistic Career" in Commentary, November 1981.*

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## Nkomati: down the drain

The foundations of the State Department's program for "stability" (that goal of goals) in southern Africa has been a wooed-away Mozambique and a constructively-engaged South Africa, and the cement securing these foundations was the Nkomati accord, by which South Africa and Mozambique agreed to stop supporting each other's internal guerrilla movements. Well, the State Department is now sitting with the broken pieces of that accord in its lap — just in time for Mozambican President Machel's visit, too.

In response to charges by Mr. Machel, South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha has admitted that his country provided aid to Renamo (Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana) even after Nkomati, by helping it build an airstrip and maintain radio communications, and by odd favors such as transporting resistance leaders into Mozambique in South African subs. The question of arms aid is still unresolved. Also still unresolved is the question of whether Mr. Machel continues to harbor the African National Congress, as Mr. Botha asserts he does.

This development is a considerable loss of credibility for the State Department, which urged the Nkomati accord on South Africa; also for Mr. Botha, who became a forthright spokesman for the Nkomati arrangement,

and who has urged visiting American conservatives to embrace the State Department policy of embracing Mr. Machel.

As for Renamo, the State Department charge that it is not "indigenous" is incredible, no matter who aids its movement. The poverty and tyranny which Mozambique suffers are such as to cause many Mozambicans to join the rebels, and to suffer the hardships caused by Renamo activities such as knocking down power pylons. All possibility of change is cause for hope. The grapevine has it that Rhodesian intelligence gave Renamo a leg up back when opposition to Mr. Machel was just beginning to crystalize. But Rhodesian and South African aid do not explain Renamo's obvious plenty in terms of one essential resource: men willing to fight.

Renamo ought not to be so reticent about its alleged past sources of help. If the overthrow of Samora Machel happens to suit the purposes of certain objectionable regimes, Renamo has every right to turn this to its advantage; guilt by association is supposed to be out. Renamo's stated goals are an end to Machel's Marxist tyranny, denationalization, and multiparty democracy. An awful lot of Mozambicans seem willing to take a chance on them.